

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1216

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CH

SUBJECT: CHIANG CHING'S CULTURAL ROLE

REF: HONG KONG 7946

SUMMARY: AS REFTEL NOTES, CHIANG CHING'S LEADING ROLE IN CULTURAL AFFAIRS IS INDEED BEING STRESSED BY PEKING MEDIA, PARTICULARLY IN CONNECTION WITH REVOLUTIONARY PEKING OPERA. USLO FINDS THESE ARTICLES SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVE, HOWEVER, AND BELIEVES THAT PRESENT SPATE OF ARTICLES ON CULTURE AND CHIANG CHING'S ROLE IN THIS FIELD MIGHT INDICATE FELT NEED FOR BUILDING HER UP AND GAINING WIDER POPULAR ACCEPTANCE OF HER CONTRIBUTIONS.

1. FOLLOWING IN WAKE OF CHU LAN'S PIECE DESCRIBED IN REFTELL, PEOPLE'S DAILY JULY 16 CARRIED FULL PAGE ARTICLE ON PAGE TWO EXTOLLING THE SIGNIFICANCE AND USE IN STRUGGLE OF REVOLUTIONARY OPERA. ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY "WRITERS, GROUP OF PEKING AND CH'ING HUA UNIVERSITIES". AS IN CASE OF
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CHU LAN'S ARTICLE IT MADE SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO CHIANG CH'ING'S

DISCUSSION OF REVOLUTIONARY PEKING OPERA AT JULY 7, 1964 FORUM ON PEKING OPERA AND MODERN DRAMA, SAYING THAT THIS WAS IMPORTANT IN GUIDING THE FORUM TOWARD REVOLUTIONARY VICTORY.

2. HOWEVER, WHILE JULY 16 PIECE IN PART EMPHASIZES THE POSITIVE IN ACCLAIMING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF REVOLUTIONARY DRAMA (AND BY INFERENCE THOSE OF CHIANG CH'ING) IT ALSO IMPRESSES US AS HAVING A VERY DEFENSIVE NOTE--ABOUT HALF OF TEXT IS DEVOTED TO POINTING OUT DIFFICULTIES IN ESTABLISHING ACCEPTANCE OF REVOLUTIONARY OPERA AND POINTING OUT INSIDIOUS NATURE OF THOSE WHO IN THE PAST HAVE SUPPORTED TRADITIONAL OPERA, INCLUDING "TRAITORS" LI LI-SAN, WANG MING, AND OTHERS. IT SEEMS CLEAR FROM THIS THAT TASK OF POPULARIZING REVOLUTIONARY OPERA HAS NOT BEEN AN EASY ONE AND THAT MANY PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES STILL REMAIN (WE GET THIS SAME IMPRESSION FROM EXTRACTS FROM CHU LAN'S PIECE WHICH APPEARED IN PEKING ENGLISH NCNA JULY 17).

4. ILLUSTRATIVE OF POSSIBLE PROBLEMS IN POPULARIZATION OF REVOLUTIONARY OPERA, USLO PERSONNEL AND FOREIGN DIPLOMATS VISITING NEW OPERAS AND ATTENDING CONCERTS OVER LAST YEAR HAVE NOTICED RATHER TEPID AUDIENCE REACTION TO REVOLUTIONARY OPERA AND SONGS THEREFROM. IN CONCERTS AUDIENCE HAS USUALLY APPLAUDED FAR MORE ENTHUSIASTICALLY PERFORMERS SINGING SONGS OF NATIONAL MINORITIES OR FOLK SONG ORIGINS, SOMETIMES ALMOST TO THE POINT OF EMBARRASSMENT. MOST RECENT EXAMPELE NOTED BY USLO WAS CONCERT JULY 5, DURING WHICH VARIOUS SINGERS SUPPORTED BY CONDUCTOR LI TE-LUN AND FULL CENTRAL PHILHARMONIC ENSEMBLE PRESENTED SIX SONGS EXTRACTED FROM CURRENT REVOLUTIONARY PEKING OPERA. ALTHOUGH LI AND SOME WELL-KNOWN SINGERS RECEIVED GENEROUS APPLAUSE WHEN THEY FIRST APPEARED ON STAGE (PRESUMABLY BASED ON PAST REPUTATION) SUCH WAS NOT THE CASE FOLLOWING THEIR RENDITIONS WHEN CLAPPINGS WAS PERFUNCTORY. IN CONTRAST, STAR OF THE EVENING WAS UIGHUR GIRL WHO SANG NATIONAL MINORITY SONGS (ALBEIT WITH TYPICAL REVOLUTIONARY LYRICS) IN HIGH FALSETTO. SHE DID FIVE ENCORES.

4. IT IS POSSIBLE TO DEDUCE FROM FOREGOING THAT WORK
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STILL MUST BE DONE TO ESTABLISH REVOLUTIONARY OPERA AND WITH IT REVOLUTIONARY OPERA'S PATRON SAINT, CHIANG CH'ING, IN A MORE SECURE POSITION IN THE MINDS OF THE PUBLIC. SHE MAY BE "IN" OFFICIALLY, BUT IT SEEMS TO US THAT ELEMENTS SUPPORTING HER MIGHT WELL BELIEVE HER POSITION NEEDS FURTHER BOLSTERING, HENCE THE PRO-REVOLUTIONARY OPERA, PRO-CHIANG CH'ING ARTICLES.

5. AS FOOTNOTE TO FOREGOING, AT JULY 5 CONCERT NOTED ABOVE

PIANIST YIN CHENG-CHUNG OF "YELLOW RIVER CONCERTO" FAME WAS
VERY WELL RECEIVED WHEN HE PLAYED PIANO RENDITIONS OF SEVERAL
MORE-OR-LESS TRADITIONALLY INSPIRED PIECES. YIN PLAYED SO
VEHEMENTLY THAT HE BROKE TWO STRINGS OF PIANO WHICH DANGLED OUTSIDE
OF INSTRUMENT INFULL VIEW OF AUDIENCE.
HOLDRIDGE

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